Chair,

Director-General,

Colleagues,

Belgium fully aligns itself to the statement made by Croatia on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

We need three essential instruments in the fight against COVID-19: firstly an ambitious whole of government approach, secondly effective health systems and thirdly diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and other medical equipment.

WHO plays an essential role in the management all three of these instruments. Therefore, I explicitly express my support to the WHO and its leadership.

Chair,

Allow me to make a few remarks:

1. First, as you know, Belgium decided to report not only deaths from confirmed COVID-patients, but also suspected cases. Although WHO recommends this approach, we note that we’re one of the very few countries to do so. Unfortunately, this brings us to the top of the international mortality charts. We believe that we should all register data in a more uniform way. If not, effective monitoring of the disease is impossible.

2. Secondly, in search of a treatment and a vaccine we need international cooperation, coordination and solidarity. We count on WHO to help us create instruments to assure the equitable
access to a possible vaccine. Belgium is also ready to show its international solidarity by making ICU beds available for humanitarian personnel in its hospitals.

Chair,

In Belgium we have a strong tradition regarding the development of new treatments and vaccines. We recently allocated 5 million euros to CEPI for research and decided to invest 20 million euros in an academic anti-infection unit, a Belgian “vaccinopolis” to say so, to quickly test and evaluate the efficacy of vaccines on humans.

3. To end, I would like to stress the importance of accessible primary health care services. What’s more, in order to mitigate the collateral damage of this crisis, we should by all means avoid interruptions in essential initiatives on vaccination, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

I thank you for your attention,